

Meeting Roles

Productive meetings are conducted in an efficient, smooth manner and also are documented for follow up activities. To accomplish this, you may need the help of three participants to function as **timekeeper, facilitator, and notetaker**. If the meeting is a regularly scheduled meeting-such as a project status report-assign the roles to a different person each time.

▪ ***Timekeeper***

Effective meetings start and end on time. To help make that happen, use a timekeeper. The timekeeper notes the amount of time allotted on the agenda for each activity and keeps track of the actual amount of time spent. If the group goes beyond the allotted time for an activity, the timekeeper interrupts (gently) and asks the group to make a decision: Should they continue the activity now or at a later meeting? If a discussion is particularly productive, moving other agenda items to another meeting can be worthwhile, but first gain agreement from participants.

▪ ***Facilitator***

Facilitation is a highly desirable skill set that requires learning and practice. People often underestimate its importance and difficulty. During a meeting, the facilitator has two main jobs to do: to draw out quiet participants and to prevent other participants from dominating the discussion. To draw out quiet participant:

- ask by name if the person has something to contribute: "Bob, you seem concerned; do you have anything to add?"
- recognize when someone has made a contribution: "That's a good point, how does that affect the situation?"
- ask a question and have everyone respond to it one at a time.

A slightly sneaky way to keep someone from dominating the discussion is to assign that person to be facilitator. Other ways are to interrupt gently and ask someone else for his or her opinions or remind everyone of the time limits on agenda items.

- ***Notetaker***

The notetaker serves as the official historian for the meeting. Depending on the structure of the meeting, he or she might take notes on a flipchart, in which case the notetaker should periodically check to ensure that points are recorded accurately. Alternatively, the notetaker may keep notes on a pad of paper, use an electronic whiteboard, or photograph flipcharts with a digital camera. In any case, the notes should be typed up and distributed to all participants.

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